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Rowan Gibson: Understanding the innovation process to successfully innovate.

Posted By [admin](#) On April 5, 2008 @ 11:12 am In [Business trend](#), [BusinessBIT](#), [InnovationBIT](#) | [1 Comment](#)

A few leading-edge players – including GE, IBM, P&G, Whirlpool, Shell, Cemex, Best Buy, and W.L. Gore – are demonstrating that large industrial organizations really can tackle the challenge of innovation successfully in a broad-based and highly systemic way. How do they do?

[Rowan Gibson](#), strategist at Strategos, has figured out that, these corporation understand the innovation process. He said that if business leaders want to create a highperformance “innovation engine” inside their organization, they need to **recognize and address three cultural preconditions for making breakthroughs happen**: (i) creating time and space in people’s lives for reflection, ideation and experimentation; (ii) maximizing the diversity of thinking that innovation requires; (iii) and fostering connection and conversation – the “combinational chemistry” that serves as a breeding ground for breakthrough ideas.



Next, they need a **methodology for systematically generating novel strategic insights**, including (i) company and industry orthodoxies that deserved to be challenged, (ii) trends and discontinuities that could potentially reshape the business landscape, (iii) competencies and assets that could be leveraged to create opportunities; (iv) beyond the boundaries of the existing business, and emergent but as yet unaddressed customer needs.

The next step is **to “crash” various insights together** to see if the collision opens up new opportunities for innovation. In addition to this ongoing insight discovery and ideation work, business leaders should open up the innovation process to their extended network of customers, suppliers and partners, involving all of these constituencies in the search for new growth opportunities.

Then business leaders should **make sure that they employ the right evaluative criteria** at every stage of the opportunity development process. It is also crucial to build mechanisms for rapidly reallocating resources behind new growth opportunities, as well as an “innovation architecture” that gives strategic coherence and consistency to their opportunity portfolio.

Finally, to drive innovation to the core, they need to **put the necessary systems, structures and processes** in place to make innovation a selfsustaining enterprise capability and a tangible core value.

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